



SDMS DocID

270365

19. 10. 1984
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Residents, EPA clash over air monitoring at superfund site

By Cate Chapman

Billerica residents, along with some twenty other residents from around New England, were closeted for over four hours with top U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials Thursday night in a "demand" and answer session that won them few new concessions on the clean up of the Iron Horse Park Superfund site.

No TAGA 6000 van, a device measuring chemicals in parts per billion, would be deployed in

the area of the industrial park, said EPA Regional Administrator Michael Deland, until he knew the extent of Billerica's problems versus others.

In a written response to demands submitted last month by the Coalition of Concerned Citizens of Billerica (CCCCB), Deland said that "preliminary air monitoring, to determine if the air route is a concern that relates to the hazardous waste problem, will be conducted during the early phase of the Remedial In-

vestigation and Feasibility Study (RIFS)" of the park this winter.

An EPA spokeswoman was unable to say earlier this week whether preliminary monitoring would test for anything other than asbestos at the site, however.

Residents have requested that the van be used immediately to test for the presence of toxic and hazardous chemicals on an around-the-clock basis for two weeks.

"The possibility of using other air pollution detection methods, such as the TAGA 6000 van, will be considered later if the preliminary data indicates that it is necessary," he said.

That position met with stiff opposition.

"We have an industrial park with a lot of activity," said Salem Road resident Mary Davenport at Thursday night's meeting. Also attending the meeting, which was organized by members of the National

Coalition Against Toxic Hazards (NCATH) and held in Waltham, were Jackie Gurney of Pondover Road and Mary Wirroll of Philip Road.

"We want to expose what chemicals we're dealing with," said Davenport.

"You're right," said Deland. "Whether the 6000 is the piece of equipment — there's a technical judgement to be made."

Deland suggested residents "lean on the DEQE" (state Department of Environmental and

Quality Engineering) and the state Attorney General's office for enforcement of regulations prohibiting toxic or noxious air emissions from industries.

"We have been leaning on the DEQE for two years," said Davenport, who added that modifications made by Dynamit Nobel Corp., at the behest of DEQE, were not working. Emissions from the company, she said, can still be detected at

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